

Tayside Swift Survey

Swifts are returning from their African wintering grounds in ever decreasing numbers. According to the BTO, Scotland has lost 62% of its swift population in recent years. This can be in part attributed to widespread property renovations that are not taking swifts into account. All nesting birds are protected by law so please plan your building work outwith the period May to September or check directly for swifts (and bats)!

Your help is urgently needed to find out where these birds are nesting in Tayside. This information will help map Swift Priority Zones and help guide plans to ensure the protection of their nesting and feeding sites.

Please complete the form, adding any general comments you wish on a separate piece of paper. Please post to Catherine Lloyd, Tayside Biodiversity Partnership, c/o Pullar House, 35 Kinnoull Street, Perth, PH1 5GD. Or you can complete this survey online via www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk. For more information please contact Daniele Muir: dmuir@taysideswifts.co.uk or Catherine Lloyd: caglloyd@pkc.gov.uk.

And please join the Tayside Swifts Facebook page to keep in touch!

You can download the Swift Best Practice Advice Note from SNH via www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/2017/03/10/swift-best-practice-advice-notes/ or other advisory notes for builders, contractors and architects from Swift Conservation (UK) www.swift-conservation.org
 Scottish-wide advice: Concern for Swifts (Scotland) - www.concernforswifts.com / swiftscot@yahoo.co.uk Tel 0141 554 8262.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has a series of leaflets on many species, including swifts. Tel 0131 557 3136 or check www.rspb.org.uk.

Name:		SWIFT SIGHTINGS (approx how many?)	NESTS <i>(either tick the box or give nest numbers if possible)</i>
Address:			
.....			
DATE	LOCATION and TYPE OF BUILDING—please be as accurate as possible		

What are the differences between swifts, swallows and house martins?
Here is some general information about two other summer visitors.

The Swallow

A graceful flier, the swallow's long tail streamers make it distinctive from a distance. Close up you can see the peach-coloured underparts and the red throat and forehead. Like swifts, they feed on insects as they fly. They sometimes settle on telegraph wires and buildings, especially in the autumn, where large groups will perch together before starting their long migration to Africa.

Nests are an open shallow cup of mud, often found in outbuildings where there are suitable dark ledges. To help them nest in a garage or outhouse fix a nest platform high up out of reach of cats. Or fix a woodcrete nest to a wooden backing plate. Put a piece of plastic sheeting (from a black plastic bag) beneath the site to catch droppings.

The House Martin

They are very much town birds and if you have an oldish house with eaves, you may be lucky enough to have them nesting beneath your roof. House Martin flight is high and fluttery. Watch out for the white underparts and rump and the wide forked tail. They often fly in company with swifts and swallows, especially over water where the insects they feed on are abundant.

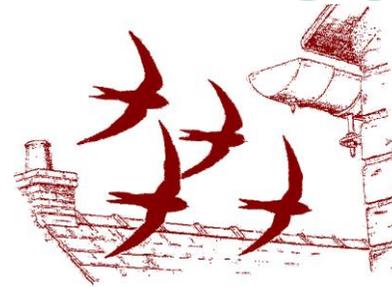
Nests are built of mud and are found on the outside of buildings, in colonies. One of the main things you can do to help house martins is to provide a muddy pool or puddle in the spring – most of our gardens are far too tidy! If droppings are a problem (especially if the nest is over a door or window) fix a shelf (255mm) 2m below the nest to catch the droppings.

Please remember that all these birds are protected by law and must not be disturbed in any way

Contact SNH for further details on legislation: Telephone: 01738 444711



Town Swift Survey



The Swift ("Lum Screamers")

Swifts are bigger and stronger than house martins or swallows and they are sooty brown all over. They dash over rooftops, their strong scythe-like wings seeming to slice the sky. Swifts, perhaps more than any other bird, are masters of the air. Their life is spent on the wing – they actually sleep on the wing too: landing only to nest or in very bad weather. Like us, they are largely adapted to urban living, depending almost entirely on small holes in buildings or under the eaves. In Tayside they are now being discovered nesting in isolated houses and steadings in the glens. Their nest consists of just a few feathers or straw gathered from the air, cemented with saliva. The nest is inside the fabric of the building and not visible from the outside. Most modern building methods deny access to swifts and may critically affect populations. Some builders and architects are incorporating nest sites into new houses and refurbished buildings – but you can help too. Contact Tayside Biodiversity Partnership for further details.

